Exploration and Discovery.

CUTHA.

In the parched desert, a little to the east of the road which leads from Bagdad to the ruins of Babylon, and about half-way between the Tigris and Euphrates, is an extensive group of mounds known as Tel-Ibrahim. The mounds mark the site of Cutha or Ku-tu, an ancient Babylonian city of special interest to Bible students on account of the story which 2 Kings 17 : 24–41 relates of its inhabitants. It was from this city, and also from Babylon and Sippar, two cities at which the Germans are now excavating, that Sargon, the king of Assyria, transported the inhabitants to occupy the homes of the exiled Hebrews of Samaria. The story says that the Cuthæans, together with the other captives, thus forced to live in a foreign city, refused to adopt the religion of Yahweh, the Lord of the land, and as a punishment for their obstinacy, lions were sent to destroy them. Sargon averted their destruction by ordering one of the Hebrew priests which had been exiled from Samaria to return and teach the Babylonians the religion of the country in which they were living, but the captives continued obstinate ; the religion of their mother country could not be discarded so easily, and the Cuthæans made images of their god Nergal, and placed them in the sacred shrines of the Hebrews. Centuries later, when the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem, and still later, in the time of Jesus, a prominent element of the Samaritans, so hated by the Jews, were the same Cuthæans.

The ruins of Cutha are situated far from the present route of travel, and lying low are visible at a distance only from the summits of the surrounding mounds and sand hills. Few Europeans have visited them, and they escaped Layard's notice altogether. Rawlinson was the first to examine them, and he read upon their bricks, which date from the time of Nebuchadrezzar, the name of the city Ku-tu, identifying the ruin with the biblical Cutha. George Smith, the next explorer to visit them, says that the main mound is low but enormous in size, being three-fourths of a mile in length. In shape it is like a crescent with a smaller mound in the hollow, and "walls and masses of brick work protrude from heaps of rubbish in various places."

In 1879 Rassam made a slight attempt to explore the ruin, but during the month which he spent there with fourteen men at his disposal he discovered baked bricks bearing the name of Nebuchadrezzar, and a few inscribed tablets, and some bowls covered with Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions. The severe sandstorms, the lack of drinking water, the approaching hot season, and the termination of his firman, compelled him to abandon the work before accomplishing any results.

A few years later Dr. Ward spent two or three hours on the mound. He mentions some protruding masonry of sun-dried bricks, and describes the hill as "large and practically unexplored," washed and gullied by the rain. A carcass was lying at the opening of the tunnel which Rassam had dug, and his guide, fearing that a lion or another wild beast of the desert might be lurking there, did not venture within. Dr. Ward observed the traces of a canal between the two mounds, and it is now known that the ancient Cutha was situated on a large ship canal, known as the River of Cutha, probably the Shatt en-Nil which branched off from the Euphrates above Babylon and after passing through several important cities, joined the Shatt el-Hai opposite Telloh.

It is only from the Nebuchadrezzar bricks which Rawlinson found in the ruin, that we can identify it with Cutha. The Assyriologist may be truly thankful to the great builder and king who stamped each brick with the name of the city in which it was used. It is only by the aid of the cuneiform inscriptions that we are able to reconstruct an outline of the history of Cutha. They tell us that it was one of the few great cities of Northern Babylonia, taking rank with Babylon, Sippar, Akkad, and Nippur. Of these Akkad or Agade (Gen. 10 : 10), the city of Sargon I., is the only one not yet identified. The name of Akkad appears in the very early inscriptions, while Cutha is mentioned for the first time in the inscriptions of Dungi, about 2900 B. C., yet the city is undoubtedly much older. A possible conjecture is that unless the Akkad of Genesis lies deep in the ruins of Anbar, on the Euphrates, it may be identical with Cutha, for as the name of one disappears from the tablets, the other appears. Gemil Sin, king of Erech, 2750 B. C., speaks of repairing the temple of Nergal at Cutha; the city is again mentioned on the famous gates of Ballawat; Assurbanipal says that he captured the city and transported a part of its inhabitants; it was a part or a suburb of Babylon in Nebuchadrezzar's time, and it fell into the hands of Cyrus before he captured Babylon in 538 B. C. An Arab historian, Ibn Athir, says that Said captured Cutha in the

sixteenth year of the hejira, or in 738 A. D. It therefore appears that the history of the city extends over as great a period as any other in Babylonia, and that it survived the end of the empire by more than a thousand years.

What the political importance of Cutha may have been can be determined only by excavations; its religious importance was not inferior to that of Borsippa, Ur, or Nippur. Here was the center of the worship of Nergal, the god whose image the Samaritans made and worshiped in the shrines of Northern Israel. It was in his honor that Sargon gave to an Assyrian town the name Dur-Nergal; he occupied a prominent place in the Assyrian pantheon and is frequently mentioned in the royal inscriptions; his temple, E-shid-lam, was kept in repair by the early kings of Southern Babylonia, and services in his honor were apparently continued for three thousand years; Nebuchadrezzar offered him a daily sacrifice of six lambs.

Nergal was a merciless god, inspiring only dread and fear, never love. His worship was necessary to avert calamity. Like Ninip, he was the god of war and of the destruction which accompanies war; the ideogram for a sword also expresses his name. He is described as carrying the weapons of the kings in battle. He is also the god of pestilence, fire, and the burning sun of midsummer. Also, like Ninip, he was the god of the chase, and is represented as a lion. Hebrew commentators say that he had the form of a cock, but no trace of this idea has been found in the sculptures. From the god of war and pestilence it is but a step to the god of the underworld, the Babylonian Hades, as the mythology makes him. Among the tablets discovered at Tell el-Amarna, one was found relating that Nergal with his fourteen companions visited the underworld, and, like Ishtar, the porter, Namtar, refused him admission. Finally, when the opposition was overcome, he left one of his companions on guard at each of the fourteen gates through which he passed. At last, reaching the presence of Allatu, the queen of Hades, he rushed upon her and dragged her from her throne. Seeing that she was overpowered, she begged for mercy and, submitting to him, said:

> You shall be my husband, and I will be your wife,
> You shall be master, and I mistress.

Thereupon Nergal kissed Allatu and, wiping away her tears, married her.

The story, apparently a version of Ishtar's Descent to Hades, was told to explain how Nergal became the god of the underworld. In

this character he was so prominent that the underworld was also given the name of Cutha, from the city which was his abode; and from this fact we may expect to find Cutha the center of an ancient necropolis. Nergal is also mentioned in connection with his consort Laz, but of this wife nothing but her name is yet known.

A statement of peculiar interest regarding Cutha is found on a tablet from the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, recording the story of the creation of the world. The tablet says that the story was copied from an ancient tablet in the library at Cutha. This is an indication that somewhere in the mound of Tel-Ibrahim there is a Babylonian library of great antiquity and importance. If for no other reason than this, excavations at this point promise as much as at any other in Babylonia, and the ruins of Cutha are perhaps the only ones of the very ancient cities of prime importance in which the excavator has not yet dug deep enough to learn at least something more than the name.

EDGAR JAMES BANKS.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

JEWELRY FROM THE TOMBS OF EGYPT.

READERS of the BIBLICAL WORLD have doubtless already heard something of the remarkable results of Professor Petrie's excavations at Abydos on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund. In the course of the first two seasons' work Mr. Petrie cleared out the tombs of the kings of the first two dynasties, which had been done carelessly and inefficiently by the Frenchman, Amélineau. As the kings of the earliest three dynasties have heretofore been very slightly known, the discovery and excavations of their tombs have furnished us with materials of the rarest interest. The reader will find in Petrie's two volumes, which were promptly published after his completion of the work in the tombs, a full presentation of the remarkable discoveries of this remote age.

It would, of course, be impossible to discuss these materials here Perhaps the most surprising of the revelations of Petrie's spade are the products of the goldsmith and the lapidary. No one had dreamed that a civilization so vastly remote could produce such work. The two cuts accompanying these remarks may serve to suggest the character of the workmanship.

The first is a gold bar, the purpose of which is unknown. It bears on the upper end the name of no less a personage than Menes, the